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Thomas Jefferson's Library

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I cannot live without books

THOMAS JEFFERSON, JUNE 10, 1815

Left: Carol M. Highsmith. Bust of Thomas Jefferson in the Great Hall, Thomas Jefferson Building. (Copy of bust by Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1789.) Washington, D.C., 2007. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Books may be classed from the faculties of the mind which
I. Memory. II. Reason. III. Imagination
are applied respectively to

I. History. II. Philosophy. III. Fine Arts.

		Chap
Civil.	Civil proper.	
	Ancient.	1.
	Antient hist.	
	Foreign.	2.
	Modern.	
	British..	3.
	American.	4.
	Ecclesiastical.	
	Ecclesiastical	5.
History.	Nat ^o . Philos.	
	Agriculture	6.
	Chemistry	7.
	Surgery.	8.
	Medecine	9.
Natural.	Physics.	
	Animals	
	Anatomy.	10.
	Zoology.	11.
	Nat ^o . hist. prop.	
	Vegetables.	
	Botany.	12.
	Minerals.	
	Mineralogy.	13.
	Occupations of Man.	
	Technical arts.	14.

Thomas Jefferson's Library

Throughout his life, books were vital to Thomas Jefferson's education and well being. His books provided Jefferson with a broader knowledge of the contemporary and ancient worlds than many of his contemporaries had obtained through personal experience.

Jefferson's library, which developed through several stages, was always critically important to him. In the midst of the American Revolution and while he was United States minister to France in the 1780s, Jefferson acquired thousands of books for his library at Monticello. By 1814, when the British burned the Capitol and with it the Congressional Library, Thomas Jefferson had acquired the largest personal collection of books in the United States.

Short of funds and wanting to see the library re-established, Jefferson offered to sell his personal library to Congress as a replacement for the destroyed collection. After some controversy, Congress purchased his library for \$23,950 in 1815. Although a second fire on Christmas Eve of 1851 destroyed nearly two thirds of the 6,487 volumes Congress had purchased from Jefferson, the Jefferson books remain the core from which the present collections of the Library of Congress—the world's largest library—developed.

In this reconstruction of Jefferson's library, the books have been arranged in an order that Jefferson described as "sometimes analytical, sometimes chronological, and sometimes a combination of both." Jefferson followed a modified version of the organization of knowledge created by British philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626). The books were divided into categories of "Memory," "Reason," and "Imagination"—which Jefferson interpreted as "History," "Philosophy," and "Fine Arts"—and further divided into forty-four "chapters." Included in this re-creation are 2,000 volumes from the original Jefferson Collection. An additional 3,000 or so volumes—editions that match those lost in the fire that struck the Capitol in 1851—come from other collections in the Library of Congress. Other missing works have been acquired through gifts. Several hundred volumes have been purchased since 2000. These acquisitions were made possible by the generosity of Jerry and Gene Jones.

ESSAYS UPON Several Subjects In PROSE and VERSE.

Written by the Lady CHUDLEIGH.



LONDON:

Printed by T. H. for R. Bonwick, W. Freeman,
T. Goodwin, J. Walthee, M. Wotton,
S. Mansfield, J. Nickolson, R. Parker, B. Tooke,
and R. Smith. M DCC X.

THE HISTORY OF THE First DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF VIRGINIA.

BEING
An ESSAY towards a General
HISTORY of this COLONY.

By WILLIAM STITH, A. M.
and one of the Governors of
St. JAMES COLLEGE.

London: Printed for the Author.

M D C C X L V I I .

COLLATERAL BEE-BOXES; Or, a New, Easy, and Advantageous METHOD OF MANAGING BEES,

IN WHICH

Part of the HONEY is taken away, in an easy and
pleasant Manner, without destroying, or much disturbing
the BEES; and early Swarms are encouraged.

By STEPHEN WHITE, M. A.
Rector of Holton, in Suffolk.

Sic Yea Jam Vobis
Pueris et numerare Perit.

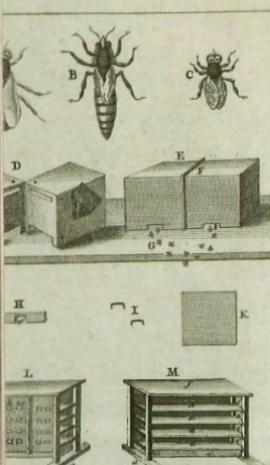
Ovid. Met.

THE THIRD EDITION, IMPROVED.

LONDON:

Printed for L. DAVIS and C. REYMERS, against
Gray's Inn, Holborn.

MDCCLXIV.

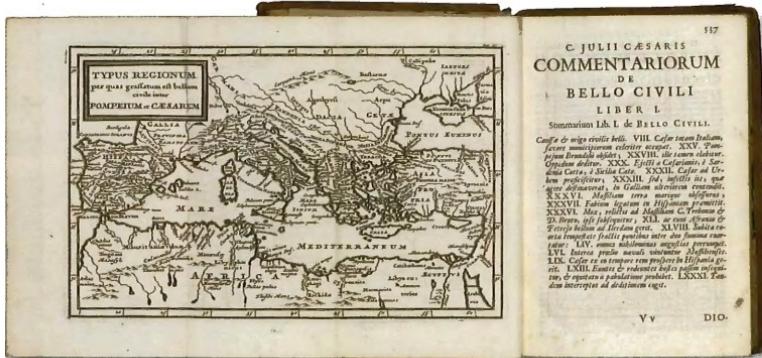


G Bees flying out of the Box
to be taken away leaving
the other Bee.
H Tung. I Five Staples.
K Loose Board.
L Front of yPrune M Back.

Jefferson the Collector

Thomas Jefferson collected books across a vast spectrum of topics and languages. Jefferson's strategy for building his library was practical; his collection was a working tool rather than a bibliophile's monument and formed the touchstone of this multi-faceted man. The inspiration for Jefferson as a statesman, politician, classicist, inventor, planter, architect, and scientist can easily be found in his books.

As major subjects, politics, law, and history predominate, but the Jefferson Collection also includes books about the domestic sciences, foreign language dictionaries, and books of rhetoric and poetry, as well as routine working manuals. Jefferson's beloved Greek and Latin classics are represented—Tacitus and Thucydides as well as Plato, who was summarily dismissed by Jefferson as "such nonsense"—as are tomes on education, shorthand, gardening, accounting, military strategy, beekeeping, and brewing. Jefferson's letters and writings demonstrate that he worked with these books and applied what he read. From his collection, Jefferson carefully compiled his significant work *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774) and culled principles that directly influenced the Declaration of Independence. He also drew from his books the inspiration for the design of Monticello, the techniques for cultivating his vineyards, and the foundation for his inventive scientific studies.



Books from the Jefferson Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress

Above: *Cæsaris et Auli Hirtii quae extant omnia. . .* by Caius Julius Caesar, 1727

Left: *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia: Being and Essay towards a General History of this Colony. . .* by William Stith, 1747

Left: *Essays upon Several Subjects in Prose and Verse*, by Lady Mary Chudleigh, 1710

Left: *Collateral Bee-Boxes: Or, a New, Early and Advantageous method of Managing Bees. . .* by Stephen White, 1764



Jefferson Lib

Throughout his life, Books were crucial to Jefferson's education and development. His first book was printed in 1773. Jefferson became a member of the American Revolution, and he traveled to France in the 1780s. He wrote his History of American Revolution, but he was also interested in science and technology. Books provided the little knowledge of the contemporary and historical world that he had.

In 1790, Jefferson became the first Secretary of State under George Washington. He was responsible for the Library of Congress, which had been established in 1790. Jefferson's vision for the Library was to have a collection of books that would be available to all Americans. He believed that knowledge was power, and that a well-educated population was essential to a strong nation.

Jefferson's vision for the Library of Congress was realized in 1800, when the Library opened to the public. It has since grown into one of the largest libraries in the world, with over 10 million items in its collection.

The Jefferson Library is a testament to the importance of knowledge and education. It is a place where people can come to learn and grow, and where the past can be studied and appreciated.

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The Reconstruction of Jefferson's Library

In many ways the books in this re-creation of Jefferson's library are a snapshot of the history of the Library of Congress. Jefferson's books were originally part of the everyday, working Congressional library. And although his original volumes have been conserved and restored, many of the other volumes were long part of the Library's general collections. Many have undergone conservation work; others are still awaiting treatment. Some books displayed have been culled from various collections throughout the Library, including other famous collections—the Benjamin Franklin Collection, the George Washington Collection, the James Madison Collection, and the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection on the History of the Illustrated Book. Books from the Law Library, Geography and Map Division, and the Prints and Photographs Division, as well as books from the Library's general collection, are also displayed.

Reconstructing this landmark library provides fresh insights into the mind of Thomas Jefferson and the world from which he drew his revolutionary ideas. This library was the well-spring of one of the nation's deepest thinkers—the drafter of the Declaration of Independence, the third President of the United States, and a true visionary who helped mold a new form of government. In this richly decorated hall of the building named in his honor, the dialogue Jefferson carried on with his books can be discovered—as well as the context in which his ideas developed. Perhaps most important, the display emphasizes the principle on which the Library of Congress has been built—that knowledge and free access to it, by both leaders and the governed, are essential to democracy.

The Books

Four categories of books are distinguished in this reconstruction of Jefferson's library.

Green Ribbon

Books that were part of Jefferson's original library are marked with a green ribbon.

Gold Ribbon

Books that have recently been purchased to reconstitute Jefferson's library are marked with a gold ribbon.

No Ribbon

Books that are identical to books owned by Jefferson and which were located in the Library of Congress collections have no ribbon.

Book Box

Books that are missing from the library are marked with a book box. On the spine of each box is the author and title of the missing book. The Library of Congress is continuing to search worldwide for these missing books and will be adding them to this display as they are acquired.

Read More About It

De Mooy, Kees, ed. *The Wisdom of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Citadel Press, 2003.

Ellis, Joseph. *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Gordon-Reed, Annette. *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. David Waldstreicher, ed. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Maier, Pauline. *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Peterson, Merrill. *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Thomas Jefferson: Genius of Liberty. Introduction by Garry Wills. New York: Viking Studio in Association with the Library of Congress, 2000.

Wilson, Douglas L. *Jefferson's Books*. Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1996.

For Younger Readers

Ferris, Jeri. *Thomas Jefferson: Father of Liberty*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1998.

Gilbin, James Cross. *Thomas Jefferson: A Picture Biography*. Illustrated by Michael Dooling. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1994.

Harness, Cheryl. *Thomas Jefferson*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2004.

Kukla, Amy and Jon Kukla. *Thomas Jefferson: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: Power Plus Books, 2005.

Severance, John B. *Thomas Jefferson: Architect of Democracy*. New York: Clarion Books, 1998.

The exhibition is available online at www.myLOC.gov/exhibitions/jeffersonslibrary. For a current schedule of exhibit-related programs including concerts, lectures, symposia, gallery talks, special tours, and films, please consult this exhibition website.

Acknowledgments

The reconstruction of Thomas Jefferson's library has been made possible by Jerry and Gene Jones.

This exhibition was made possible by Peter D. and Julie Fisher Cummings and the Marjorie M. Fisher Fund.

Thomas Jefferson's Library is a key component of the Library of Congress visitor experience, which is being made possible by the generous support of the following:

John and Maria Kluge

Microsoft Corporation
Terremark Worldwide, Inc.

Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest

Marjorie S. Fisher Fund

Roger and Susan Hertog

Jay and Jean Kislak

David H. Koch

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Xerox Foundation

Phyllis and Ray Smith

Nancy Glanville Jewell

Beatrice W. Welters

Consuelo Duroc-Danner

The Lynde and Harry Bradley

Foundation

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Glenn R. Jones

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Raja W. Sidawi

Bloomberg L.P.
Chevy Chase Bank

This exhibition was developed under the leadership of James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress.

Exhibition Team

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John Y. Cole, *Director, Center for the Book*

In addition, the Library extends its thanks to the following:

Jack Robertson, Foundation Librarian, and Endrina Tay, Associate Foundation Librarian for Technical Services, at the Jefferson Library, Monticello, for encoding the E. Millicent Sowerby *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson, 1952–1959*.
Carol M. Highsmith, Independence National Historical Park, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc.



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